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Interview with Max W. Bridge

Conducted by Cecil Roberts

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INTERVIEW WITH MAX W. BRIDGE

[Disclaimer: This interview has not been edited. Name and place spellings have not been confirmed. No acronyms are explained, nor any explanatory footnotes provided. There may also be portions of the interview that are incomplete because the transcriber could not understand what the speaker was saying.]

This is another in the series of BLM oral history interviews. The interviewee this afternoon is Mr. Max W. Bridge. Cecil Roberts is conducting the interview today, October 27, 1996, in Mr. Bridge's home in the Redlands area, west of Grand Junction, Colorado. Max, why don't we start by you telling me a little bit about your background, if you would.

MAX: Certainly. I'll start out way back, Cecil, because my parents moved to southern Idaho in 1918. I was 3 years old at the time, so I grew up in southern Idaho with a farm and ranch background. I graduated from high school in 1932 in Dietrich, Idaho, and then started to college in Pocatello, Idaho, at the Southern Branch of the University of Idaho as it then was known. It is now Idaho State University. During those years, I learned to be a hobo among other things because those were such hard times that most of us, college students and others, had very little money to spend on transportation. I rode the rails back and forth on occasions when I could visit my home which was about 100 miles west of Pocatello. After 2 years at Idaho State, I stayed out of school for a year intending to get work to help pay my college expenses. But that proved very hard to do also. After a year's absence from school, I registered at Utah State University in Logan, Utah, in the School of Forestry. I graduated in 1937 with a major in Wildlife Management. At that time, professional jobs were very had to come by and there were a number of us that would take any kind of work possible just to have something to do to make a little money. Fortunately, after graduation, I was able to start work with the Forest Service on a range survey program for the Wasatch National Forest. The head of the Range Department at Utah State University, Dr. Larry Stoddard, secured that position for

me, and it was a godsend that paid the magnificent amount of $90 a month which was real money in those days. I worked on that job for about 1 month, then received an offer that paid even more money. This was for 6 months of work on the Navajo Indian Reservation cruising timber. In the years following, I continued summer work with the Forest Service until late summer in 1939 when I was offered a probational appointment with what was then the Grazing Service in the Department of the Interior. The Grazing Service was created to administer the public lands under the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act which was passed by Congress a few years earlier. At the time, I was, of course, delighted to have an offer that would guarantee me 1 year's work. I started work with the Grazing Service in September 1939. This was about the same date that the former Division of Grazing was renamed the Grazing Service. I've always understood this name change was due to the efforts of Richard Rutledge.

CECIL: Before we go on, would you explain who Mr. Rutledge was?

MAX: Richard Rutledge had been the Head of Region IV of the Forest Service in Ogden, Utah. He was selected to become the Director of the Division of Grazing, Department of the Interior. Because of his background, he believed that the Division of Grazing was just as important as the Forest Service in administering public lands. That was thought to be the main reason he asked to have the name change made to the "Grazing Service." His request was approved by Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes. I'm not sure of the exact date of the name change.

CECIL: I'm sure that date is in the record. One other thing before you continue with your story, when you went to work for the Grazing Service in 1939, where was that?

MAX: I started work in the Lander District of Wyoming under the direction of the Chief of Party, Stewart Kern. I worked on range surveys in what was then the Lander District for about the next 2 years. Up until this time, very little mapping work of

any kind had been done of the range lands of the western United States. Particularly, this was true concerning surveys of native vegetation and its current condition. The Grazing Service needed this type of information to know more about the lands it was administering and to determine as accurately as possible the grazing capacity of the lands in order to properly stock the ranges. In many instances, these surveys indicated the need for substantial reduction in the numbers of grazing animals. Much of the range land had deteriorated greatly from early years when use of the public lands was free and unrestricted with no means of control by the Federal Government or any local agency. I continued doing range surveys through the years of 1940 and 1941. In 1942, I gave general supervision to the Survey Program and acted as an Assistant to District Grazier, Bill Vaughn, who was in charge of the Lander District. About midyear in 1943, Vaughn transferred to another position, and I served as Acting District Manager in the Lander District until my military service began in December of 1943 and continued through December of 1945. I returned to the Grazing Service in Rock Springs, Wyoming, and started work in the Soil and Moisture Conservation Program. Together with Bill Vaughn, who was stationed in Rawlins, we carried out that program for the five grazing districts in the state of Wyoming. We would do a lot of work independently but from time to time, we would work together. For instance, I remember quite well one fall when we worked up in the Pinedale area and slept in the old Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) buildings that served as sort of multipurpose offices and field storage places for the Grazing Service. That was about all of the affordable space that was available for Grazing Service employees. Most of the CCC camps had been closed down by that time, and the Grazing Service had inherited the buildings that remained from the days when the CCC organization with hundreds of men were doing much very good conservation work nationwide.

CECIL: And you were assigned to the Rock Springs District at this time, is that correct?

MAX: Yes. During my work with the S&M program, I worked out of the Rock Springs Office.

CECIL: What was the size of the staff at the Rock Springs Office at that time?

MAX: The Rock Springs Office had a clerk, District Manager Cyril Jensen, and there may have been one clerical assistant. Also, there was an excellent field man named Joe Bagley, who had worked with the livestock operators in that area for a good many years. These, plus a Range Improvement man who worked with heavy equipment in reservoir construction, fencing, and similar work, constituted the entire District staff.

CECIL: What was the relationship with ranchers like in those days, just before and after the Second World War, between the Grazing Service and the ranchers particularly in that area?

MAX: Well, during those early years, technical work in the Grazing Service was devoted almost entirely to determining the range grazing capacities for livestock use and what was called Dependent Property surveys of the ranch operations of the individual livestockmen. The grazing-use privileges that were allocated to the ranchers depended in part on the actual use that they had made of the public lands during what was called the Priority Period. This was a 5- or 6-year period of time immediately preceding the passage of the Taylor Grazing Act. One criterion used was the amount of so-called base property that each rancher owned or controlled. This could be leased lands, ranch hay lands, ranch pastures, etc., that had actually been used in conjunction with use of the public range lands as part of a year-round livestock operation. So the determination of the productivity of the controlled lands of the various landowners was one of the limiting factors that determined the numbers of livestock that they would be allowed to graze on the federal lands. The other limiting use factor was the best information that we could establish as the proper grazing capacity of the federal range based on the range surveys made in the various States and Districts.

CECIL: How did the ranchers in the Rock Springs District react to all of that and the activity of the Grazing Service in that endeavor?

MAX: The Grazing Service in each District had an Advisory Board of local livestockmen. This Advisory Board was set up under the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act. And it was meant to consist chiefly of representatives of the major livestock operations in that particular area. This was so that an equal representation could be had between the sheep operators and the cattle operators. Of course, there were a few operations that were devoted almost entirely to raising horses and, no doubt, other domestic animals in some localities. Primarily, the Advisory Boards were advisory in nature, but they did have enormous influence and they used it. In most instances in the early years, the District Managers were people who had themselves been livestock operators at one time or another. Once my father jokingly asked me, "How did it happen that some of the men selected to administer the grazing operations in Idaho were just livestockmen who had gone broke in the sheep or cattle business?"

CECIL: Going on with your experience in Rock Springs, Max. Would you tell us a little more about how the ranchers and the Grazing Service people related in those days? What were the relationships between the ranchers and you folks from the Grazing Service?

MAX: Cecil, my comments will include the years that I spent in the Lander District before World War II as well as later years in the Rock Springs and Rawlins Districts. Ranchers, at times, were very resentful of the fact that they had to substantiate their prior claimed use of the public lands. They had to certify or obtain statements from witnesses as to the numbers of livestock they had grazed on the public lands during the Priority Period. Also, they had to furnish records to the Grazing Service listing all privately owned lands and lands controlled by lease during the Priority Period. This was regarded by many as just an unnecessary interference of their personal business by the Federal Government. I think many

people recognized the fact that there had been tremendous destruction of range resources due to misuse and over-use of the public ranges for many years. There were many ranchers, good livestockmen, who realized that some changes had to be made and some regulation and control of the use of these lands had to occur. So, in general, I would say that we were usually treated politely by the individual ranchers when we contacted them for whatever purpose. I was fortunate to have grown up under similar circumstances and witnessed much of what had happened to the open range in years past, so I could talk to them, you might say, in their own language. However, without question, many of the Advisory Board members who were elected from the various localities within each Grazing District often held the view that they knew a lot more of what was needed by the country than did any federal bureaucrat. They were generally well informed about who had run livestock and what were the seasons of use made. Advisory Boards met at intervals determined by the District Manager and made recommendations as to the validity of the applications for grazing use that had been filed with the Grazing Service for use of the public lands. I think Grazing District Advisory Board members gave their best estimates of what the prior use had been. In fact, their advice was invaluable because most of us, irrespective of our backgrounds, did not have knowledge of the local conditions which had prevailed where we were then working. To sum up, the Advisory Boards had great influence on the use that was licensed by the Grazing Service District Manager. However, suggestions or recommendations of the Advisory Boards could not be accepted by the District Manager when any conflict with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act or the Federal Range Code existed. The Federal Range Code consisted of the regulations established by the Department to be followed by Grazing Service or BLM employees, based on the provisions of the Act itself.

CECIL: Did you have any problems or involvements or even consideration of water rights in those days, Max?

MAX: In Wyoming where I worked, Cecil, only the lands served as base property which would qualify for grazing use privileges. However, the location and control of waters was very important in that it often led to a particular livestock operator claiming the use of a certain area of federal range and

the exclusion of other livestock based upon his control of natural springs or a portion of natural streams. Fortunately, in Wyoming, there were usually enough naturally occurring waters for the use of the grazing livestock and wildlife. Snow was usually sufficient for use by sheep and antelope on winter range areas, where a shortage might have been significant.

CECIL: If a rancher operator developed water on the public lands, built a stock tank, or drilled a well, or in other ways developed the water, who held the water right on that water?

MAX: Most of such water that was developed on public lands, and I'm thinking now of dams, reservoirs, stream improvement, etc., was done cooperatively by use of private and federal funds. The Advisory Boards were allocated a certain percentage of the money that was collected by the Grazing Service for grazing privileges on the federal range. These funds were used as directed by the Advisory Boards but with the concurrence always, of the District Manager. Water development was one of the most important of these programs. The actual ownership of projects of that kind, and this would also include the projects that individual ranchers had constructed on public lands without any kind of permit from the State or Federal Government was, I believe, always vested in the Federal Government. In those early years, I didn't pay too much attention to factors like that, but they became more important to me when I served as a District Manager in the two Districts in Wyoming, Acting District Manager in Lander shortly before World War II; later as District Manager of the Rawlins District for 4 years from 1947 to 1951. As the years went by, with an increase in funds and personnel, the Grazing Service has been able to assume greater control of water developments as well as other types of range improvement such as fencing, road construction, etc. There has often been a conflict between the State and Federal Government concerning use and control of water. I had no actual experience myself in this matter, so I'll leave it at this point.

CECIL: In that part of Wyoming, I believe there were quite a few stock driveways and I'm not sure how far back they go. Did

you have any involvement with stock driveways in your time in Rock Springs?

MAX: Not often in Rock Springs. But certainly, I did in the Rawlins District and to some extent in the Lander District. The stock driveways were withdrawn by an earlier law enacted prior to the passage of the Taylor Grazing Act. It provided for a withdrawal of public lands from entry or disposition so as to allow the free movement of livestock from place to place throughout the range country, as well as from and to waters and from private properties to the various sections of the range lands that the stockmen had used. One of the reasons for establishment of driveways was to ensure that use of the total range area was not controlled by strategic ownership of waters or privately controlled lands. And many times, the withdrawn driveways were the only means of guaranteeing that livestock could be moved from privately owned lands to summer pastures, etc. Trailing livestock was greatly complicated in Wyoming by the so-called railroad checkerboard land pattern, which existed on both sides of the main railroad through southern Wyoming. These lands were given to the railroad companies to encourage them to build the railroads many years earlier. I think a checkerboard land pattern is the most difficult to administer of anything possible because you have an alternating checkerboard arrangement of private and public lands. In most cases, the railroad sold or leased these lands to individual livestockmen or group associations. As an example, in the Rock Springs area, the Rock Springs Grazing Association exercised virtual control of 20 miles on each side of the railroad for many miles through the southern part of the state. This association was formed well before enactment of the Taylor Grazing Act. And, so in that instance, the grazing use on those checkerboard areas was, for the most part, controlled by the association. It applied for and was granted a license by the government for full use of the total area involved. The association exercised full control of the grazing use by individual members of their association. This included where and when they could make use of the public and private lands. So, those checkerboard lands had very little management or control by the Federal Government for many years. I have no idea what the situation is today, Cecil. As you know, I've been retired for more than 20 years and furthermore, it was many years earlier that I had any on-the-ground experience in the Rock Springs District. Much of the same condition applied

to the Rawlins District except there was no overall association of users. Therefore, the Grazing Service licensed individual users for the use of the intermingled public lands within the block of railroad lands.

CECIL: Now, that's the checkerboard lands?

MAX: Yes.

CECIL: Getting back to the stock driveways, how did the field people, the people in your office, for example, feel about the stock driveways? Did they think they were a positive or a negative factor in the management of the public range?

MAX: Well, that's a hard one to answer. I'll say, first of all, as far as the management and handling of livestock, they were often a necessity although the driveways could have been and were, in some cases, established administratively by the Grazing Service. The driveways were established for the one purpose of moving livestock. In those early years, particularly, people didn't have the big trucks that now move livestock across the country and so the usual operation was for the sheep or cattleman to just move from one area of use to another via the routes they had commonly used. I'll tell you of an experience I had involving stock driveways shortly after I transferred to the Rawlins Office. It was not at all uncommon for stockmen to hold a strong dislike of a neighboring ranger user. Perhaps their fathers or grandfathers had serious battles with one another in years long past, but not forgotten. And that being the case, whenever the opportunity arose, one of them would do anything he could to stop another from making authorized use of the range land. Of course, there were various other complicating factors of similar nature, such as illegal mining claims, but I won't get into that. In this one instance, it put me on a hot seat. There was a sheep operation centered south of the Railroad Checkerboard area. I believe the headquarters for that operation were in the general vicinity of Baggs, Wyoming. The company applied for a trailing permit to winter range in the Rock Springs Grazing Association that I

spoke of earlier. The sheep operator was a member of the association even though his base operation was quite a few miles distant. He asked me for a permit to trail the sheep from his allotment by following the stock driveway which paralleled the Highway 30 for many miles according to the Grazing Service map in our office. That being the most direct route to the Association lands, I issued a trailing permit for the sheep. About 24 hours later in late evening, one of my Advisory Board members called me on the telephone, highly irate. Like most Rawlins sheepmen, he disliked the association and hated this particular operator. He wanted to know why and under what authority I had issued this trailing permit. I said, well, they had a right to use that range area and although at other times had taken a different route, this seemed the logical way to move his sheep. He replied, "there is no stock driveway trail there." I insisted that there was a driveway as my Grazing Service maps clearly indicated. He continued to assert that, "there is no stock driveway there." I had to rely on my maps and repeat "yes, there is a trail there.". Finally, he shouted, "I'm going to enjoin you and the sheep company." I think it was the Loveland Sheep Company if I remember correctly. This happened years ago, and I didn't even know what the word "enjoin" meant. I got in touch with my Advisory Board Chairman who at that time was a fine individual. He told me that there had been some special action taken by the railroad with respect to that section of the stock driveway. Although our maps currently showed these withdrawn driveway lands to exist, the railroad, which had originally agreed to designate their checkerboard owned lands as stock driveway, had later withdrawn that designation because of the objections of adjoining livestock operators. Thus, they had withdrawn from their agreement to have those lands used as a trail. So, in effect, there was no solid trail. You had a checkerboard pattern of Federal land designated and withdrawn as a driveway, but a band of sheep could not use a trail under these circumstances. So, I talked to the owner of the livestock company who was involved in this dispute and told him that there was a right-of-way that existed along Highway 30. I suggested that he trail his sheep along it moving them as fast as possible, until he reached the Rock Springs grazing lease. I told him that if there was any trespass it would be on the highway right-of-way. And that was the way it was settled. But the altered status of this trail was news to me. There was nothing in the records in the office at that time to show that this driveway was no longer useable.

This is just one example of the many situations that complicated the management of the public lands in those early years. Often, we had few, if any, records to rely upon. Our range survey program included a mapping of all land ownerships, private as well as public. Also, the existence of trails and roads and all other cultural improvements and everything of that nature was shown. However, only a small percentage of the public lands had been covered by range surveys before World War II brought this work to a halt.

CECIL: Okay. When we were last talking about your assignment, you were working on the S&M program from Rock Springs. And we've moved on to Rawlins. When did you leave Rock Springs and go to Rawlins, Max?

MAX: Let me see. I'll refer to my records, if I can read them before I answer your question. I was in the Rock Springs District Office from the spring of 1946 to the late fall of 1947. I was anxious to get back into administrative work in a District having enjoyed it in the short time I had worked in that capacity in Lander, Wyoming. Earlier, I had been promised a district in western Montana. This I was greatly anticipating because it was known to be a wonderful area for wildlife, and that had been one of my primary interests throughout my lifetime. Shortly before I was to make the move from Rock Springs to western Montana, the District Manager of the Rawlins District gave the Grazing Service 2 weeks notice that he was going to leave and go into private business. So, I was drafted to go to the Rawlins District. I was not happy about that because I had spent several winters in Rawlins during my years as a Range Examiner and the climate was ferocious. Furthermore, I had really wanted to go to Montana. But I took the assignment to Rawlins in the fall of 1947, and I was there for 4 years as District Manager in that District.

CECIL: During this time, we've sort of skipped over the formation of BLM from the merger of General Land Office and the Grazing Service and other things that went along with it such as the McCarren Holiday and whatever. So, let's stop and go back a

little bit for that, MAX. In 1946 when the Bureau was formed, you were still in Rock Springs, is that correct?

MAX: Yes.

CECIL: And how did that affect you?

MAX: Well, that was an interesting experience, Cecil. A short time earlier, the Grazing Service had, by reorganization, combined a certain number of western states into five separate Regions. The Regional Office in Wyoming and Montana was consolidated in Billings, Montana. This was while I was still in the Rock Springs Office, but preparing to be transferred to one of the other Districts either in Wyoming or Montana, that the consolidation of the General Land Office and the Grazing Service took place. A new Regional Administrator, Bud Molohon, came in to handle the Billings Office.

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CECIL: We're back on the tape. The machine sort of snuck up on us and dead ended us. Max, you were beginning to talk a little bit about the time of the formation of the BLM by the General Land Office and the Grazing Service merging and had mentioned a Mr. Molohon. Maybe you better spell that out for us about who came in as the head of the office in Billings. Could you pick it up there?

MAX: Yes. That was Albin D. Molohon, but he was usually called "Bud." He was a person of enormous personal magnetism; I hardly know how to describe it. He could command the attention of even a hostile audience of people. Further, he had the ability to talk, so as to have such an audience, in a way of speaking, eating out of his hand. He was the one who presided over the very first meeting, a meeting of the General Land Office and the Grazing Service personnel. We had a 3-day meeting in Billings, and it was interesting to note one thing. The first day, all of the General Land Office people and Cadastral Surveys people sat on one side of the room while the

Grazing Service people all sat on the other. In other words, we were two groups, largely strange to each other. Within the next day or two after many presentations were made by the representatives of both sides, we seemed to have become well acquainted. After the end of the meeting, we had a big party and a dance, as I remember. All in all, by the third day rather than sitting as two separate groups, we were well intermingled, and it just seemed that we remained so from that day forward; it was easy to consider ourselves as members of the Bureau of Land Management. But it did take a little time to get used to that title. I would say in all honesty, for a time, there was some jealousy of turf between the two groups. However, as individuals got acquainted with each other and learned more about how the Land Office and Grazing Service had functioned up to that time, soon we began to consider ourselves as members of the one agency, which we were. So as far as I can recall, we got along famously from that time forward.

CECIL: Well, that's good. It's also interesting how Molohon was able to bring that about. Did you have any knowledge of how things were going in other places at that time who might not have had the influence of a Mr. Molohon to facilitate the merger?

MAX: No, Cecil, I can't say that I've ever known or heard of anything relating to that. In thinking back, it worked out well with us. I can remember of one matter that may illustrate that point. Jack Wilson had started to work with me in Rawlins 2 or more years earlier. He had finished college after military service as I recall, and this was his first assignment with what was then the Grazing Service, soon to become the BLM. At that time, there was just Jack and myself to do the necessary field work plus the district clerk. We were the only three employees in the Rawlins District. Maude Ryan, the District clerk, did a superb job of handling all clerical work and record keeping, plus dealing with office inquiries and visitors when neither Jack or I were available.

CECIL: So, you were the District Manager of this?

MAX: Yes, District Manager, a sort of jack-of-all-trades, I guess you could say. But at any rate, the former Grazing Service people who had attended the Regional Consolidation meeting were advised that thereafter, all public lands both within and outside existing Grazing Districts would be administered by Grazing Districts in the new BLM. Formerly, the General Land Office had administered those lands lying outside of the existing Grazing Districts.

CECIL: Now were those, what were known as the Section 15 lands?

MAX: Yes. I'm glad you prompted my memory of that; that's what they were called. I remember telling Jack that he already knew as much about those lands as I did, and I wanted him to become familiar with all existing regulations as he was to assume responsibility for the leasing of them under Section 15 of the Taylor Grazing Act. Further, that I hoped within a year's time or less, he'd know twice as much about them as I did. That's about the way it turned out. Jack handled that new workload admirably as well as all others referred to him. The public lands administered under Section 15 of the Taylor Grazing Act were in more fragmented land patterns, thus generally not suitable for inclusion in a regular District. I believe that this change in administration, brought about by the consolidation of the General Land Office and Grazing Service resulted in a much better and more consistent type of management for the public lands involved. Within a year or so, following that BLM organizational meeting, I was transferred to the Billings Regional Office as a member of the Regional Range staff. At that time, the Regional Office included a Division of Lands, a Division of Range Management, as well as a Cadastral Survey's Branch or Division, and a Branch of Administration. I'm not at all sure of the terminology I used on this matter.

CECIL: Let's tie up a couple of loose ends. First, when did you transfer from Rawlins to the Regional Office in Billings then at that time?

MAX: The Regional Office had been in existence for several years before I transferred. I moved there in the late fall or early winter of 1951. I remember the weather was extremely cold. Enroute to Billings, we stayed overnight in Greybull, Wyoming. The next morning, it was 17 degrees below zero, and our car had to be towed several blocks to get the engine started. Although much farther north, the climate in Billings was a welcome change from that in southern Wyoming.

CECIL: 1951?

MAX: Yes. I did transfer from Rawlins to the Billings Office in late 1951 and so I may have misspoke earlier, if the consolidation meeting was held in ’46, that's correct, isn't it Cecil?

CECIL: Well, that's when the two organizations were merged into BLM, yes.

MAX: Well, my memory betrayed me because it's obvious that during the entire period of time that I spent in the Rawlins Office, I was actually working as a BLM employee rather than a Grazing Service employee.

CECIL: How many people were in the Rawlins Office when you left in 1951? Was Jack Wilson still with you?

MAX: Yes, Jack was there. He had been there for 2 or 3 years by the time I left. Nolan Kyle came in as District Manager following my transfer. And I think there probably may have been additional field men because the office did gain a few additional employees to work on the various District programs. Also, we had about 3 or 4 summer employees selected from college student applicants, usually from University Schools of Forestry or Range Management.

CECIL: Well, let's go back for one other thing. To 1946 and the McCarren Holiday when there was not enough money to pay everyone. What happened to you in that time, Max?

MAX: Well, that's interesting because I can remember after serving in World War II, I had told my wife with great assurance that no matter what happened in the future, we would always have a job because I had civil service status, having obtained my position on the basis of competitive Civil Service examinations. Since, in addition I now had veterans' preference, I believed completely that I would always have a job of some sort. The McCarren Holiday as we termed came along, and lo and behold, I was one of those that went on furlough along with a lot of others. What a letdown that was. We were advised to file an appeal with the Civil Service Commission, which we did. But that didn't change our status any. I was out of work for approximately 40 days, and those were scary times because we lived from paycheck to paycheck. But I was on furlough and was happy for that because it allowed my period of service to continue as though I were working, i.e., my total time of federal employment was continuing. I had my wife, and our two small daughters, travel to Utah to live with her folks in order to reduce our cost of living. Not exactly a vacation but we thought it was necessary. I started writing letters to various other agencies, mostly in the Department of the Interior, seeing if they had any positions open. About a year earlier, my ex-boss in Wyoming, Stewart Kern, the man who had originally hired me as a range examiner, had himself been dropped from the Grazing Service rolls. He had then transferred to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. When he found that I was out of work, he had contacted the Montana Office of the BIA on my behalf. The BIA had a Soil and Moisture program similar to that which I had worked on for several years with the Grazing Service. Based on his recommendation, I was notified that I could be transferred straight across to BIA without losing a Civil Service grade. The transfer would be to Browning, Montana, which is close to Glacier National Park. But I didn't hear anything further about that and the next news, which was very good, was that a deficiency appropriation had been passed by Congress and most of us who had been furloughed would be restored to active duty. Many years later, I found out what had happened to the proposed

transfer to the BIA. I'll take time to explain this, CECIL, and try not to make it too long. While I was stationed in the Washington Office, I traveled out to Great Falls, Montana, to attend a national meeting of the American Society of Range Management. At that meeting, there were a number of federal employees representing other agencies from the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, and others. Following the meeting, I rode with some State Game Department friends to Helena and then traveled by air on a short flight to Billings before continuing on to Washington, DC. On that short plane ride, I visited with several BIA friends, and I mentioned that I had come close to transferring to the BIA but was never told why a firm offer was never made. One of the BIA men said, "Well, Max, I know exactly what happened." He was stationed in the Washington Office at that time. He said, just as they were ready to forward transfer offers to a number of Grazing Service people on furlough, word came down from the Department to withhold action. Efforts were being made to provide the Grazing Service with supplemental funds and the agency didn't want to lose their experienced employees. So, that's the story. But it was a scary time, CECIL, thinking back to the McCarren Holiday. None of us knew what our future would be, and I know in the years following the War, many of us lived from paycheck to paycheck. Believe me, we were reaching in every direction just to find employment of any kind. The deficiency appropriation resulted in most of us going back to active duty and from that time forward, I never suffered through another situation such as that one.

CECIL: Before we go on to Billings, let's talk a little more about your time in Rawlins. What were your principal priorities or issues that you faced during those 4 years, Max?

MAX: Well, those were still "early years" insofar as obtaining good administration and control of the public lands. The Rawlins District was less fortunate than some of the other Wyoming Districts, in that it had only a few areas covered by standard range surveys. Most of the Rawlins District had nothing of that nature. For about the first 6 months that I was in the District, I left the District Clerk in charge of maintaining the office as I mentioned earlier. I spent weeks and months driving along the various roads leading throughout the range lands just to become acquainted with the District.

Traveling many miles from the nearest highway, I would, by using a compass and clocking the miles, enter the roads on the official District map. This was just to find where they led. This was for my own benefit as well as my successors in the District. How to get to and from the lands we were supposed to administer was a number one priority for me. At the same time, having a lot of range study experience, I would make a sort of windshield survey of the grazing potential by vegetative types of the lands through which the roads led. By doing this, I could at least provide some background information to supplement what had originally been simply estimates by the Advisory Board members. Thousands of acres of federal range land lacked any type of vegetative studies which could provide a reasonable estimate of animal unit months of use available for cattle or sheep. The original estimates of grazing capacity had been off-the-cuff recommendations from the Advisory Board members. Perhaps the chief concern of Advisory Boards was to see that a fair allocation of range use privileges was made to all qualified applicants. In this request, to avoid any question of fair use, the Federal Range Code provides that the application for grazing use by Advisory Board members will be acted upon solely by the District Manager. In my experience, while Advisory members were well versed in livestock management, they seldom had an equivalent knowledge or concern about the condition or trend of range vegetation and similar matters. For example, I recall one incident when a young livestock operator, about my age, I was then in my late 20's, came into the office carrying a clump of Indian rice grass which is an excellent range forage plant. Max, he said, out in the area where I'm wintering my sheep, I see a lot of this plant showing up and I've wondered if it was dangerous to livestock. I remember telling him, Bob, that's the best news you could have given me because the more of that grass that comes in the better. To him, it was a relatively new plant, and he was afraid that it might be poisonous. So, that illustrates to a degree at least that changes in range conditions, either good or bad, are not always recognizable by an untrained observer. Don Baily preceded me as the District Manager in the Rawlins District, and, as mentioned earlier, had managed the District for 2 years before leaving to go into private business. Later, he rejoined the Grazing Service in New Mexico. Both of us had professional training and we worked to bring the District records and management practices up to professional standards that were applicable. But, first of all, I devoted my time to learning

how to get to and from the lands I was supposed to administer. I couldn't discuss federal range conditions or problems with anyone until I knew something about them from personal observation. And, so I'd say that was my number one priority. Then along with that, as soon as possible, I started working on individual ranch operations, reviewing the case file records, and in many cases, making adjustments to the qualifications for livestock grazing privileges.

CECIL: How did that go over? Did you have many appeals?

MAX: Quite a few. And fortunately, I never lost one but sometimes it was a close call. But I'll give you an example of one that scared me. This particular livestock operation was one that had been in existence in the Rawlins area for at least 30 to 40 years. I believe it was started prior to 1900. It was a large sheep operation run by one man and a brother both of whom had grown up as sheepmen under their father's direction. The second brother had earned a law degree. So, he knew sheep operations better than I did and a lot more about the actual use of the range by their sheep. When it came to the grazing capacity and similar range matters, I could out talk him because I had the professional education in that field. But he was a good, sharp attorney and it was to his brother's operation that I mailed a formal notice stating that "based on the review of their total range use operation, I was reducing their full Federal Range qualification from 10,000 sheep to 7,000 sheep." This reduction was based on the fact that their total base property (owned and controlled private lands) would not carry more than 7,000 sheep for the minimum B.P.R. (Base Property Requirement) for the Rawlins District, which was 100 days. The company had been carrying an unused grazing permit for around 3,000 head of sheep from the date when the District was created. The attorney brother whom I knew had been involved in prior hearings both as a friend of the court, you might say in some cases; in others representing people that were filing appeals. He met me on the steps of the post office building in Rawlins as I was leaving our office one day. He said, Max, what about this notice of our no longer qualifying for a grazing permit for 10,000 sheep. I replied, your father's operation never did fully qualify for that number of sheep and I think you know that just as well as I do. The company does not have enough base

property to meet the minimum requirement to graze that many sheep on the Federal range. He said, well, that's funny, Max. It has always met that requirement in the past years since the District was first established. And I agreed that had been the case. But, I said, nobody ever really did the work to determine whether or not your lands were fully qualified for 10,000 sheep. I have done that as the basis for my decision. Then he laughed and said, to tell you the truth, we never intended to run 10,000 sheep again anyway but if we were going to sell our operation any time in the future, it would be nice to say we could transfer 10,000 head of sheep grazing privileges instead of 7,000. He also confided that his father had known both the first Advisory Board Chairman and District Manager in those earlier years and they were good friends so never looked into such matters too closely. That's one instance of what could have been a tough appeal but didn't develop. I had a number of appeals during the years I worked out of Rawlins. Sometimes they involved the actual use of a specific range area. There would be a conflict between two operators, would go to an appeal because one or both were dissatisfied with the District Manager's decision. We always tried to obtain an amicable settlement of such a dispute and usually would get an agreement. After a vigorous debate, one would say something like, oh well, Joe, you stop at such and such a ridge and I'll stop on the other side of it and then that will be the division line between us. And then, one would say "let's drink to that," and so it would be ended. But sometimes those cases would go to an appeal, before the Department of Interior Hearings Examiner; such cases might involve bitter disputes and verbal battles at Advisory Board meetings. These were times when Advisory Boards really helped us because the Board members were usually acquainted with the on-the-ground situation that might have existed long before the Taylor Grazing Act was passed. And almost invariably, there would be some member of an Advisory Board who knew the local situation involving the conflict of interest. So, they could take a strong part, and did, in helping BLM or the Grazing Service determine where range division lines should be established and matters of that kind.

CECIL: How about on the reductions that you were imposing there? How did the Advisory Board relate to that? Did they support you or did they oppose you?

MAX: Either one could be the case. One of my most difficult appeals was filed by the Chairman of my Advisory Board. I issued the initial decision on that case a short time before my transfer to the Billings Regional Office. Nolan Kyle followed me as Rawlins District Manager, and so he represented the BLM at the hearing. Here I'll digress for a minute. In the early years, a District Manager would usually have to present and defend the government's case before the Hearings Examiner. And sometimes he'd be facing a battery of lawyers brought in from a distant city hired to represent the applicant. Particularly, this was true of wealthy operators who could afford to employ the very best of attorneys. Well, they could tie us in knots on matters of legal procedure. Departmental Hearings Officers came from a separate office of the USDI and had no connection with the Grazing Service or BLM. There were several Hearings Officers, men with legal training who more or less acted as a judge and jury. This was somewhat similar to a District Court operation. The appellant with his attorneys would be on one side and the local District Manager on the other. Sometimes the Regional Grazier or his representative would come out to help. But he usually wouldn't have legal training either; would open the meeting and then turn it over to the District Manager to carry the ball, i.e., to present the facts of the case that were subject to appeal and give the basis upon which his decision had been made.

CECIL: Excuse me a sec. You did not have any support from Departmental lawyers such as a Solicitor's Office or whatever?

MAX: Not in those early years. However, shortly after the formation of the Bureau of Land Management, we finally had a man with legal training in each Regional Office. In the Billings Regional Office that was Max Caplan. Max had formerly worked for the General Land Office and he had a law degree. From that time forward, when an appeal was filed, Max would come down to the District Office a few days ahead of time. He would review our proposed presentation of the case. He could pick out flaws in it, if any, and would give us help in improving our presentations. I can well remember one time when Max probably saved my bacon. In that instance, I had based my decision on

one particular provision of the Federal Range Code, and it was correct. But there was another provision that was equally strong, and I had overlooked it. When Max looked it over, he asked if in my official notice on this case, had I cited this other section of the Federal Range Code. The answer was no, because I believed I had a strong case on the one provision, and I didn't even think of the other. His reply was, I wish you had included that in your notice as well and, of course, I wished the same thing. When the hearing opened the next day, the first thing MAX Caplan did was address the Hearings Officer saying something to this effect: "Your Honor, there is another section of the Federal Range Code that applies equally to this case. It was omitted by error in the initial decision, but I would request that it also be considered in your decision to be rendered in this appeal." Of course, the appellant's attorneys immediately took strong exception to this request. But the Hearings Officer ruled in favor of the BLM in this instance and allowed the case to proceed on that basis after noting the objections filed. Now that's a separate case. I wander all over the place.

CECIL: We're back on the tape after a short break.

MAX: Now back to the case that I mentioned earlier, an appeal from my Advisory Board Chairman concerning a matter on which I had taken the initial action. As stated before, my successor in the Rawlins District, Nolan Kyle, had presented the Bureau's response to the appeals with the help of the legal advisor from the Billings Office. The case had been appealed from the Hearings Officer's decision to the Director. That was the usual procedure. The Director's Office had considered the case and had upheld the District's initial decision. Then the appellant took the appeal to the Secretary of the Interior which was the final step in the appeal procedures. Eventually, the Secretary of Interior also upheld the Hearings Officer's decision. Let me go off the record for a moment if you will.

CECIL: Before we get into your experience in Billings, Max, was there any particular interest in outdoor recreation on the

public lands while you were in Rawlins and Lander other than hunting and fishing?

CECIL: Rock Springs and Rawlins. But Lander, too, is okay.

MAX: Right. What I say will apply to all Districts. I'd answer that this way. Early on, there were at least some of us that recognized that wildlife had a place in the overall picture. It was hard to even get consideration for that value. The needs of big game animals were given some recognition. Now that applied to the general public as well as most livestockmen. Furthermore, many Grazing Service employees themselves regarded those values that way. Most everyone recognized hunting and fishing as a bonafide use of the public lands; other forms of recreation, not at all. That was unfortunate but that was the way it was.

CECIL: Well, that was recreation as viewed by the Grazing Service and the Bureau. How about the public? Did the public have any interest in what we consider outdoor recreation on the public lands?

MAX: In those early years, very few people even realized the great importance of BLM lands for big game animals. Excepting antelopes, most hunting was done on the National Forests without realizing that game animals had to have somewhere to go when the snow got deep in the high country. Strangely, full appreciation of the many recreational values of GS/BLM lands was many years in coming. People were constantly making use of the public lands for various other types of recreation, but in most instances, without knowing the lands were public. Further, any recognition of these lands being an important factor in the overall land conservation and protection picture was very much lacking at that time. Later, during my time at the Regional Office in Billings, there was an increasing recognition by groups such as the Audubon Society and others that the public lands were valuable for purposes other than the grazing of livestock. But it was still many years before that

interest and concern became really widespread. Are we about finished with this? Or do you want me to continue on?

CECIL: Well, we have enough tape to continue on, yeah. It may sneak up on us again but go ahead.

MAX: All right. At the time I went to the Billings Office.

CECIL: And when was that?

MAX: The late fall of 1951 was the time of my transfer. I went into the Range Management staff there. A.D. Molohon was then Regional Administrator for the Region with Headquarters in Billings. The Region included the states of Wyoming, Montana, and the Dakotas. Robert Morgan had in earlier years been the Grazing Service Regional Grazier of Montana. Under the new organization, he became the Regional Chief of the Range Management Division. And at that time, there were other organizational Divisions created as well. At any rate, I started working on the Range Staff there; I believe my Civil Service title was Regional Range Examiner. My work became much more interesting, and I enjoyed Billings very much. My duties involved such things as making periodic inspections of District programs and operations. In effect, a sort of an in-house checkup of how things were going. Also, staff members were available for help whenever a problem arose. For example, there might be a touchy situation coming up for discussion at a forthcoming Advisory Board meeting. One of us would go to the District in advance for a review of the matter and to the extent feasible, support what the District Manager proposed to do or had done. We would participate in the discussion that took place and often could take some of the pressure off of District personnel. On one occasion, the Regional Forester and I made a cruise of some good standing timber on Elk Mountain in the Rawlins District. There had been no access to the area until a road was constructed while I was the District Manager in Rawlins. Since I had cruised timber for the BIA in Arizona and also for the Forest Service in Utah, I had the experience to help out in that instance. In matters that involved wildlife, I

was nearly always called on because of my educational background at Utah State University. To sum up, the Regional staff members were available to assist in overall management of the public lands in about any capacity.

CECIL: How many of you were there on this range staff?

MAX: In addition to the Chief, Bob Morgan, there were three additional staff members besides myself. Floyd Larson gave direction to the S&M program. I had worked with Floyd during my 2 years in Rock Springs. Maurice (Scoop) March worked on the Fire Prevention and Control Program, and Cyril Jensen worked chiefly on the Range programs for the Region. In short, Cy, Floyd, and I were all assistants to the Division Chief, Bob Morgan. We liked Billings, it was a nice place to live and was enjoyable from the standpoint that we had associations with many more Bureau employees. Also, our families developed friendships that lasted for many years. It was a very pleasant period of time.

CECIL: Max, we're right about at the end of this tape. We're going to shut it off here.

END OF TAPE

CECIL: This is the second session of the BLM oral history interview with Max Bridge. This session is taking place on the morning of October 28th, 1996, again at Mr. Bridge's home. MAX, when we finished up yesterday afternoon, you were pretty well into your job at Billings to which location you transferred to in 1951. And had mentioned a little bit about your job and who some of your colleagues were at that time. Why don't we finish up with Billings, whatever additional thoughts or comments you might have and go on from there.

MAX: Very good, Cecil. I might just say further that we continued our work there in Billings for approximately 2-1/2 years before the BLM again had one of its periodic organizational changes. The Regional Offices were abolished as

I recall. All BLM lands were separated into three major Area Offices. The Area Office for Montana, Wyoming, Utah, and I believe several other states was established in Denver. About half of the Billings staff moved there. The others stayed in Billings to continue work under what reverted back to a State-by-State organization under the direction of a State Supervisor. I was directed to transfer to the Bureau Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

CECIL: When was this, Max?

MAX: That was in the summer of 1954. It was definitely in the summer because I remember the first few weeks in Washington, DC, hunting for a house to rent was one of intense heat and frustration. The reason I was moved to Washington was because at that time, I believe I was the only employee in BLM that had majored in Wildlife Management. It had become evident that someone must assume some responsibility for that activity within the BLM. I was actually transferred to the Range staff which at that time was headed by Gerald M. Kerr. Supposedly, the plan was for me to spend about half of my time on wildlife management or related activities and the other half on range activities. However, because of the workload involved and the general shortage of people, I worked more nearly 80 to 90 percent of the time on range matters and the balance of my time on wildlife and related activities. Also, I was told early on that during my tenure back there, the Bureau badly needed an operational manual to help District employees deal with problems related to wildlife management on the public lands. As the time went by, it became very evident to me that I was never going to be able to get that task completed unless I made some special effort. So, finally after about 4 years in the Washington Office, I started working for several hours at home each evening just writing out in longhand what I believed should go into such a manual. I borrowed freely from manual instructions of the Forest Service and from some of the more progressive state wildlife agencies that had developed instructions and regulations applicable to BLM administered lands. Each day as I returned to the office, I would hand the penciled copies of the material completed the night before to a secretary for typing. Then after my review, it went to my boss, Gerry Kerr, for his okay before going on to the Director. Finally, when it was very

nearly completed, I had an opportunity to transfer back West to the field organization. This had been my objective for at least the prior 2 years of my stay in the D.C. area. I made that move to Reno, Nevada, in the summer of 1954. Now, let me check some notes to be sure that I have that right.

CECIL: I thought we moved to Washington in 1954. From Montana to Washington. That's one of the pitfalls of trying to read your own writing when you make notes.

MAX: Well, you were exactly right, Cecil. It was in ’54 that I went to Washington, D.C. It was in the summer of ’59, that I was transferred to Reno, Nevada, to the position of Chief of the Range and Forestry Division for the State.

CECIL: Before we get on to Nevada, tell us a little more about what your responsibilities were in Washington, other than writing this wildlife management manual which you did largely on your own time. What did you do during the day so to speak, in real life?

MAX: All right. From what I can recall, the work was very interesting in most respects, and it was certainly good experience. Much of my time was devoted to answering requests for information from the members of Congress. Such requests often originated from complaints made by constituents from the western states. They usually related to actions taken or proposed by BLM District or State Office employees relating to either wildlife or range matters. Such requests were bucked down to the Range Division Chief and all staff members worked on these requests. We would prepare a response based upon what information we could obtain from the field office involved. This would include actions they had taken, and whether they believed there was any merit to the questions that had been raised. Reports of this nature were prepared and then forwarded for concurrence through several levels of jurisdiction. If the contact originated in the Secretary's Office, the response usually went through the Director's Office and then to the Secretary of the Interior for reply. Relating to the foregoing,

the Director would often receive a request for consultation from the Departmental Solicitor's Office. When the matter in question involved Range or Wildlife management, the Chief or a Division staff member would meet with the attorney who had originated the request. This often involved a bill, submitted by a member of Congress, which if it became law, would have an impact on BLM operations. Or it might be an appeal to the Secretary of the Interior from the BLM Director's ruling on a Hearings Officer decision, which had been appealed from an action taken by a BLM field office employee. At this level, the federal attorney commonly had little or no concept of western range conditions or BLM operations at the field level. So, an ex-fieldman's advice was usually greatly appreciated. There were many other more or less routine levels of work; but after so many years have passed, it's a little difficult to recall them in any detail. I know that the whole staff, myself included, at various times attended State, Regional, and nationwide meetings that involved the work of BLM. And in particular, during those years, I nearly always attended anything related to fish and game activities such as the annual meetings of the State Fish and Game Commissioners. Then, of course, meetings of such nationwide organizations as "the American Society of Range Management" (It's now called "the Society for Range Management") were always of direct interest to the Bureau. In addition to such matters as preparing and reviewing manual procedures referred to earlier, review of less detailed operational memoranda, etc., was a more or less constant activity. This included anything in the nature of directives to field offices that were often in need of change or amendment and to be brought up to date. Then there was almost constant interagency cooperation involving areas of mutual interest or concern, but I'll take that up later. Overall, this was certainly an interesting period of time for me.

CECIL: What kind of support was there in the Washington Office for your writing a BLM wildlife manual?

MAX: Well, I had good support for that effort because it was needed. After I had made the move to Reno, there was one small section that I had not finished, and it was completed in the Range Division before the manual was published in final form. I'm sure there were a lot of shortcomings in it, and I

have no idea how long it may have been used before amendment or replacement. But at least it was a start in recognition of the fact that there were many more values to the public lands that needed to be protected and enhanced in addition to those in the general field of range and livestock operations. They had received major consideration for a number of years and finally the general public was calling for a more balanced approach to public land management.

CECIL: Your position in Washington after you left, was it filled with a wildlife-trained person?

MAX: My position was filled by Bill Matthews, a well-qualified man from the Idaho State Office, but I believe his college major was in a related field. During my years in the Washington Office, I believed that the position had not received the Civil Service grade rating that it merited. The Division Chief agreed with that, therefore, I had prepared a revised position description with a suggestion that it be upgraded by one GS grade. I left Washington before that was completed, but I gladly transferred laterally to the field because of my great desire to return to the West.

CECIL: So, Bill reaped the rewards of your reclassification of the job?

MAX: Yes, I believe so.

CECIL: Okay. Maybe we can go on with Reno now?

MAX: Yes, I guess so, Cecil. I can perhaps add more concerning the degree of cooperation with other agencies that was required.

CECIL: Mention it. The record's running.

MAX: All during the years that I was in Washington, there was at various times a great need for coordination of effort to avoid conflicting operations between or among government agencies that deal with public lands. To the extent possible, agencies with similar management responsibilities would make a serious effort to coordinate procedural instructions being provided to the field even crossing Departmental lines. This was particularly true in dealing with the U.S. Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture. We met from time to time on matters of mutual interest and that was always enjoyable for me because several of my classmates from Utah State University were then working in the Washington Office of the Forest Service. Within the Department of Interior, I worked quite often with representatives of the Fish and Wildlife Service and occasionally with the Park Service and other Interior agencies. I'll wrap up for now and shall we move to Reno?

CECIL: Well, your comments brought another question to my mind. Do you recall during your 5 years in Washington any specific major issues that were either priority issues in the range division or that were getting a lot of attention? You mentioned you were responding to a lot of congressional inquiries and things like that. Was there any particular thing then that was raising a lot of interest such as grazing fees, range adjudications, or anything like that was particularly noteworthy during that period?

MAX: Well, Cecil, there were certainly many, many instances in which all of these activities that you've mentioned were taken up, and they were important. But, as to any change in the degree within which the questions and complaints came in, they were more or less constant and continuing. Perhaps as I have time to look over what we're discussing here, I'll be able to fill in a little more later on.

CECIL: Well, why don't we go on to Nevada then. You came in as Chief of Range and Forestry in Nevada.

MAX: Yes, that's right.

CECIL: And that was again in 1959?

MAX: Yes.

CECIL: Okay. So, let's pick it up there.

MAX: All right. It was great for me to get back to the West because I missed the whole western country very much. Living in the East was okay but that was a temporary assignment as far as I was concerned. The work in Nevada was as interesting as it always had been. I enjoyed working the first 2 years under State Supervisor, Ernie Palmer, who later transferred to another agency in Portland, Oregon. After Ernie left, Russ Penny moved in as State Supervisor for the next 2 years of my time in Nevada. My staff and I gave general direction and assistance to all of the programs that were being carried out in the Districts. I had a staff that included specialists in the field of range management, wildlife management, forestry and fire control, and soil and moisture conservation. At that time, there was no official position of Associate or Assistant State Supervisors. Therefore, Division Chiefs served in that capacity and as Acting State Supervisor when so designated. Because Advisory Boards consisted almost entirely of elected livestockmen, the R&F Division Chief took the leading role in arranging and conducting State Advisory Board meetings and similar meetings with the concurrence of the State Supervisor. There may have been a specialist in recreation; no, I'm wrong there, that didn't come until a later period in Denver. The staff members gave assistance when needed to the District programs of their specialty. They helped the District Managers respond to any suggestions for change in emphasis in a particular program such as perhaps an increase or decrease in the work effort that they believed was proceeding too slowly. This covered about every aspect of the total management program in the District.

CECIL: Nevada's sort of well-known in the last few years for things such as the Sagebrush Rebellion and other evidences of

less than benign relationship with the Federal Government. Was there much of that during your tenure in Reno, Max?

MAX: I don't believe that there were any active efforts of that sort while I was in Nevada. But I do recall that the first protest against the government taking control of the public lands originated in Nevada; this was in the very earliest years after passage of the Taylor Grazing Act. And that protest, if you want to call it that, went clear to the Supreme Court if I remember correctly. The Supreme Court affirmed the right of the United States to administer the lands which had never at any time been other than the public domain. In recent years, the so called "Sagebrush Rebellion" has again made news. Probably one of the chief reasons for Nevada being a hot bed of this protest is because Nevada has by far the greatest percentage of the total state area, under BLM management, as compared to any of the other western states. I've forgotten the percentage figure, but it is true that the major portion of the total land acreage in this state is administered by and under the control of the Federal Government through the Bureau of Land Management.

CECIL: Was there very much interest during this time in lands program, demand for lands? For example, in the areas around Las Vegas and perhaps other developing areas?

MAX: Well, the whole Las Vegas area became highly important to gambling interests many years ago. I believe that it was the first legalized gambling business in the United States. Of course, it was also legalized on the East Coast around Atlantic City many years ago and perhaps in other locations? And so, there was and is a lot of that activity around the Las Vegas area but it was largely limited to the immediate area around the city itself. I'm quite sure that the expansion of the gambling business probably had an effect on the BLM operations. But that was outside of my area of responsibility, so what I knew of it was largely hearsay. I don't recall any disputes or challenges to public land management during the period that I was in Reno other than the more or less normal number of appeals from BLM decisions at the District level.

CECIL: You went to Reno, then, in 1959. And how long did you stay there?

MAX: I was there until sometime in 1963. There had been a conference of State and Washington personnel which resulted in, once more, a considerable movement of people. A number of Nevada employees were moved. And, after a certain amount of give and take? I'm going to have to think about this.

MAX: Okay, Cecil, after thinking about this for a few minutes, I can at least tell you what ended my tenure in Nevada. I had been up to the University of Nevada giving a slide lecture to a group of summer school teachers from the state. The slides depicted the various activities that the BLM carried out and was just a general information program. I had a call from Russ Penny in the Washington Office while I was so engaged. He asked if I would be agreeable to a transfer to the State Office in Phoenix, Arizona, to head the Range and Forestry Division operations in the State. Martin Buzann, who was in that position would be transferred to Reno. I was told that Martin had been in his position 16 years, and it was believed that such a move was desirable. Actually, these moves were part of what we termed in those years, the Slave Market, wherein many moves often took place. About every 3 to 5 years, BLM, and before them the G.S., would come up with a whole new plan of administration that was going to correct all of the ills of the past. And then after a few years, it would be repeated. This seemed to go on almost as if it were a regular Bureau activity or program. I did resist this particular proposed move because I didn't believe I could tolerate the heat of the Arizona climate. I realized that it was an excellent place to be in winter, but I didn't believe I could stand the heat of the summer. So, I did request further consideration of this particular move, something I had never done before. I was told to just hold my fire and they would look into some other possibilities. Within a couple of hours, I had a follow-up call from Russ and this time he said, well how about a move for you to the Denver Office to head up the work in Colorado. Roy Bean, the one who occupied that position, would move to Phoenix and Martin Buzann would move to Reno. I said that was fine by me, so that resulted in my transfer to Colorado in 1963. I made the move from Reno to Denver and assumed the position of the Chief

of the Division of Natural Resources in the State. This was a new title but work responsibilities in Colorado were very much as they had been in Nevada.

I commenced work under State Director Lowell Pucket until his transfer to be Director of the Bureau program at the Denver Federal Center about 2 years later. I was perhaps most helpful to Lowell because of my background in the field of wildlife management. Relations within the Colorado Game & Fish Commissioner had been somewhat strained. I was able to work harmoniously with the Game Department personnel and this seemed to relieve Lowell's concern about not having BLM's interests preserved in such cooperative ventures as were occasionally undertaken.

Again, I was fortunate to have a good, well experienced staff which is invaluable in a move of this kind. The group included Bob Bucknam, a well experienced Forester with many years of public land management in both the Forest Service and BLM; Jim Andrews in Range Management; Leroy Sweet in S&M; and Carl Lind in Wildlife Management; all very capable employees. In later years after the retirement of Andrews and Sweet and the transfer of Lind to another State, these positions were filled by equally qualified BLMers, Thompson, Pearson, and Applegate. There were always differences among States in the level of program effort necessary to be applied to the different fields of activity. But there were no significant differences in ongoing programs at that time. However, during my tenure in the Colorado State Office, a recreationist position was added to the Division of Natural Resources and that was a badly needed addition. The Bureau was receiving funds and had started construction of recreational projects on suitable public land sites. One in particular was in the Montrose District where some excellent campgrounds were established. The Montrose District is unique in one respect. In a locality near Lake City, BLM administers an area that is situated in part above timberline. This was said to be the only place where one could travel through National Forest lands and proceed to BLM lands lying at higher elevations. The new position was filled by a transferee from the Forest Service who had good background experience, and he did very capable work.

Also during that period of time, there was quite an increased effort in developing more comprehensive fire prevention and control programs and procedures for the public lands. Brock

Short and Pat Barden were the two specializing in that work, and they served under the general direction of the State Forester, Bob Bucknam. Other than these two activities, I can't recall any particular changes in the overall Division work program during the 8-year period that I served in the Colorado State Office. In 1971, there was again a general movement of personnel among State and Field Offices. I was told that I was to be moved once again. My last move was to the Federal Center to serve out my final 2 years of work with the Bureau.

CECIL: Before we get into that move to the Service Center, Max, a question comes to mind. During the while that you were in Denver and also perhaps when you were in Reno, the Bureau was getting serious about land use planning and development and application of the planning system and so forth. How did that affect your role and the role of your Division of Resource Management both in Denver and Reno?

MAX: I guess I can best answer that by pointing out that there was a Division of Lands at the State level and also there was a separate unit, I don't know if it was a division, that carried out the Cadastral Surveys program in Colorado. The Lands Division was comparable to the work programs carried out in the Range Resources Division. It was headed by J. Elliot (Curly) Hall, a friend and coworker dating back to my years in the Montana State Office, 20 years earlier. We coordinated our work programs at all times and there were no significant problems that developed at any time. I would say that probably the work of the Lands Division was carried on directly with the District Offices similar to the programs that I was interested in. Through all my years at the Colorado State Office, there were always very harmonious working relationships and complete cooperation among the several divisions. I considered it to be a well organized program that worked very efficiently at the State level.

CECIL: Max, were there any minerals management people in the Resources Division at that time such as petroleum engineers or mining engineers or geologists?

MAX: Yes, there were persons with that background and training in the Lands Division, in fact, the Division itself may have been entitled Lands and Minerals. I'm hazy on that point but insofar as I know, it worked well throughout the State and at the field level. Also, the General Land Office was headquartered in the State Office and those invaluable records were always available to the general public as well as federal and state agencies. With all major BLM programs being headquartered in the same location, there was ample opportunity for good coordination and cooperation on any particular matter that might need attention.

CECIL: Okay, continue.

MAX: In 1971, I was working with State Director Ed Rowland, who without question, was the finest boss I'd had in all my years with the Federal Government. I had earlier advised Ed that I planned to retire after 2 more years of service. I then owned my home in Denver and another move out of state would have been a personal hardship. I asked if there was any comparable assignment that I could have during my last 2 working years. Ed relayed this query to Director Silcock and Associate Director Turcott and by good luck, I was able to move to a vacancy in the Range Office of the Natural Resources Division in the Denver Federal Center. I worked with Floyd Kinsinger and other staff members in the Range Office while I was there. Glen Fulcher had moved out from the Washington Office to take charge of the entire Resources Division which involved Range, Wildlife, Lands and there were others. I've forgotten the exact titles of the offices involved as is well evident. Earlier, you mentioned Hank Ash - was he a geologist?

CECIL: Hank is a geologist, yes.

MAX: I'm quite sure that Hank was there at that time. I knew him but I never did work directly with Hank. And there were others; I believe Jack Edwards was in the Service Center in that Division. He is now retired and has moved to Grand Junction. I can't remember exactly what Jack's specialty was,

Economics, maybe? Work at the Service Center was different from what I had done previously. It perhaps was more comparable to what I had done during the years that I spent in Washington, D.C. Service Center personnel commonly traveled to all of the western states, and we would occasionally go back to the Washington Office for Bureau or special meetings. During travel to the various sates, we would often visit some of the District Offices. But our first stop was always at the State Office for a general discussion of technical problems that might exist or questions about procedures that were being implemented. These were matters in which the Service Center staff members could usually give helpful advice to the State and District Offices. It was interesting work. One of the new Bureau programs that had developed on a nationwide basis during that period resulted from the "Rare and Endangered Species Act" passed by Congress. Principle responsibility for developing procedures to carry out the provision of this new law was centered in the Fish and Wildlife Service. But the Act involved BLM to a great extent because of the importance of BLM administered lands as habitat for the rare and endangered species of birds, mammals, fishes, and even snails or what have you? That program, since it pertained to wildlife specifically, was of deep interest to me. I and a member of the Wildlife Office, John Crawford?, I can't be certain of his last name, worked together to develop field procedures applicable to public lands under BLM administration. One of our first efforts was to obtain the services of a biologist to describe habitat requirements for species of endangered birds or mammals known to inhabit BLM lands. Emphasis on habitat requirements for any particular species was of primary importance since major responsibility for the animals themselves was with the states or other federal agencies. Our intent was to come up with information that would be useful to field employees who would have to determine to what extent the public lands in certain areas might be critical to the health and wellbeing of any and all endangered species.

CECIL: Max, let me interrupt, we're about out of tape.

TAPE ENDED

CECIL: We've turned the tape over, we're back on. And you were talking about development of the programs under the Endangered Species Act when we had to shut off for a minute.

MAX: We were well engaged in that line of work at the time of my retirement. I'm not sure to what extent it was continued, expanded, or reduced. But, at any rate, it soon became well know to the public in general and to BLM employees in particular that Bureau administered lands are of great importance for the preservation of numerous species of endangered wildlife to be listed by the Fish and Wildlife Service. In fact, I was detailed back to Washington for 2 weeks to work directly with F&W Service specialists on that program. At that time, I had the feeling that the F&W people were themselves more or less groping for what their program should be and how to proceed. As to how much assistance I might have been is open to question. I remember that I went directly to the F&W Service Offices and the man who was to direct that program was just getting his feet on the ground so to speak. He handed me a list of some questions that had been forwarded from their field offices and asked me to help prepare a response or explanation in each case. I did this to the best of my ability considering that the whole program was new to everyone. We all believed it was going to be highly important in future years. This was an opportunity early on for me to get my feet wet in it. But I'd have to say that I wasn't able to do a great deal of work on it, excepting during my last 2 years. And, again, as in earlier years in the Washington Office, perhaps 3/4s of my time at the Service Center was devoted to range matters. While at the Service Center, the BLM made what I believe was the third attempt, during my 30 odd years with the BLM and GS, to arrive at a grazing fee formula that would be acceptable to the livestock industry and regarded to be fair by the members of Congress. Many members of Congress complained about the fees being far too low, and even today, that feeling persists. To the best of my knowledge, we had no more success on this third effort than had been the case on the previous two studies.

CECIL: Or since then.

MAX: Yeah. It would make interesting history for someone to write on this subject. When I first started work with the G.S., I was told of the efforts made by the Forest Service to obtain a basis for grazing fees on National Forests. A man named Dan Casement made an extensive survey of Forest Service lands on this very problem. I believe the Grazing Service attempted to follow somewhat along the lines of those developed by the Forest Service, based upon the Casement report. But initially, and I'm getting back into ancient history, when the lands first came under active control by the Grazing Service, a charge was established at 5 cents an animal unit month. I think I mentioned earlier that an animal unit month was defined as enough usable forage for a cow and calf or five sheep to keep them alive and healthy or words to that effect. At least one of the early G.S. Directors, and I can't remember for sure which one, proposed that this fee should go to 8 cents an animal unit month; he was fired. He lost his job because of that effort. Then in later years when Marion Claussen became BLM Director, and I must say at this point, in my opinion he was one of the finest Directors we ever had, another study of the grazing fee problem was made. It was Dr. Claussen who, during his time as Director, moved our agency into more of a professional organization, in contrast to what it had been in prior years; not that his predecessors hadn't made similar attempts. But Marion was, in my view, about the most successful. And during his time, the Bureau again made a grazing fee study; I spent a lot of time on it myself. This was during my 2 years in the Billings Regional Office. I coordinated the study work in two of the Districts in the Region. One District was headquartered in Miles City, Montana, under District Manager Tom Dudley. The other was the Pinedale Office in Wyoming managed by District Manager Burt Silcock. After a year's work in all States, the study results from the States and Districts were reviewed and discussed at a meeting with Director Claussen. I really don't know what happened after that, but I doubt if it resulted in anything of much significance. It was a worthwhile effort, but if I learned one thing from it that is that the whole matter is extremely complex and complicated. When one considers the great variation in on-the-ground conditions among the western states and districts, that alone is mind boggling. Then add the influence of local, state, and national politics, and you have a problem that is well-nigh insolvable. Our study may have had some influence on future Bureau policies, but I don't know of that personally.

CECIL: One other question. Going back to the Endangered Species Act and you mentioned it seemed to you that the Fish and Wildlife Service was having a little trouble sort of defining how they should fit into that law and how that law would affect them and so forth and so on. What about BLM at that time? Did it have trouble figuring out how it needed to respond to the law?

MAX: Well, Cecil, it was brand new to all agencies and if I said anything that would seem critical of the Fish and Wildlife Service's approach, I didn't mean it in that light. I think both our agencies were in a very similar spot. It was completely new to everyone. It was a program that had never been considered at all prior to that time. And so, it was sort of a hit and miss approach that was taken in the early years. And I think that as far as the BLM was concerned, we recognized our role as more of a supportive effort to that of the Fish and Wildlife Service. They carried the real power in applying the law to the public lands and developed practices and provisions for its application. I'm sure that BLM personnel gave the Fish and Wildlife Service all of the help that was possible. I know that we worked with them in the field, at all levels. Where there were areas of real concern, almost invariably the Bureau was able to reserve those lands or put them in some sort of protected role. Every effort was to prevent habitat destruction which might thus eliminate or reduce numbers of the species involved. Of course, my personal involvement in the matter was only during a short time before my retirement.

CECIL: Another law, of course, that came during your time in the Colorado State Office and is carried over to this day was the National Environmental Policy Act which was signed right in the early days of 1970. How did that affect your job as Chief of the Resource Management Division in the Colorado State Office in Denver and then I'm sure that there would have been, at least I feel reasonably sure there should have been some carry over into your 2 years at the Service Center. And we'd like to hear a little bit about that.

MAX: Well, in answer to your question, Cecil, and after considerable thought, I cannot recall any particular instance either during my last years at the State Office in Colorado or the succeeding 2 years that I served at the Denver Service Center that directly related to the Environmental Policy Act. I've always believed that the N.E.P. Act was of greatest importance in giving legal standing to much of what the BLM had for years attempted to accomplish through Departmental and Bureau regulations. This was in contrast to the Forest Service which always seemed to be a step ahead of us in that respect. From the date of its inception in 1970, the N.E.P. Act gave the Department and Bureau the same force of law to establish procedural regulations and enforce them with the same level of legal authority as was true with the Forest Service on National Forest Lands. I recall that for many years prior to that Act, the BLM had in many instances tried to give consideration to the need for environmental protection in conjunction with planned programs. One specific case might be the change in the Bureau range fencing standards which had been developed years earlier. Unfortunately, in many cases, the original standards resulted in range fences greatly impeding the natural migration habits of various species of wildlife. This was particularly true for antelope where in deep snow years a serious winter death loss occurred. Certainly, this had been a problem throughout southern Wyoming and perhaps to a lesser degree in other states. I know that problems of this nature came up frequently throughout the public rangelands. To the extent possible, we always took remedial action but not always backed up by environmental laws. Commonly, changes in work standards and procedures were made in response to criticisms from environmental groups or sometimes to similar requests from State Wildlife agencies. The N.E.P. Act allowed us to include such considerations into Bureau projects and programs. Of course, these matters involved the Lands and Minerals and all other Bureau Divisions as well as the Resources Division.

CECIL: Okay. That covers the issue, I guess, because the whole purpose of the interview is to relate your experiences in the history of the Bureau. So, we covered some of your time in the Denver Service Center and what your job was there. Is there anything that you'd like to add to that?

MAX: Not right at this time, Cecil. I appreciate the chance to dust off my grey matter cells if I still have any. It's quite difficult to accurately recall a number of matters that seemed highly important years ago. But I will look forward to the chance to review the draft of this interview we've had. I've enjoyed it actually. And I'm sorry to say that my memory isn't what it should be but at least I've tried my best to recall what might be of interest. Perhaps later, I'll be able to correct most of the mistakes or omissions I've made.

CECIL: We'll send you a transcript of the tape so that you can do that, Max. One thing that we haven't done that still remains is when did you decide that you'd had enough, and it was time for you to retire?

MAX: Well, the date of my retirement, I can remember very well. It was the first of July of 1973. We had a wonderful retirement party in Denver. Particularly, this was gratifying because there were three of us from the Colorado State Office -- Curly Hall, Robert Bucknam, and myself and also Cyril Jensen who had retired a year earlier in Salt Lake City and who came over to take part in the celebration. We had worked together during many of those past 30 years or more. There were others; George Holt retired as head of the personnel agency in the Service Center and several other Service Center staff members who had worked with George. So, there was quite a group of us, and it was a wonderful occasion. I was ready to retire, and I have had no regrets since.

CECIL: Thanks very much, Max.

END OF TAPE